

The Ballarat Naturalist

May 2017



The Falkland Islands

Presented by Rob and Cynthia Watkins

As Emily noted in the meeting minutes Rob and Cynthia Watkins from the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club shared their beautiful photos and fascinating and funny stories of the bird life and geology of "The Falkland Islands" as discovered on their two week trip around some of the hundreds of islands there in 2014.

As notes were not taken at the talk the following report highlights features of their presentation with the help of *Wikipedia* and the *Tourist Board of the Falklands*.



Photo: Typical landscape of the Falklands

The Falkland Islands are located some 650 km off South America in the south Atlantic Ocean. There are two main islands in the archipelago, East Falklands and West Falklands.

The soil types in the islands vary, due to the relative dryness of the west compared to the east, and differences in altitude. Many coastal areas have tussock grass which needs high humidity and salty air to flourish. Inland habitats are often heath, either grass or shrubs, or feldmark made of cushion plants. Lowlands have acidic peaty soil

with a low fertility.

There are no trees native to the area, leading to a wide proliferation of grass species. The climate and soil composition combined with limited knowledge and inadequate protection have meant that past attempts to establish trees on the islands have not been very successful, although various attempts have been made over the past 80 years.

The lowlands support grass in wetter areas, but only shrubs in the drier areas. In the areas with high nutrient levels, the lowlands can support turf however most peat is very shallow and lies on top of clay. The mountains usually have clay or stony soils, and so support a very small diversity of species.

The wildlife of the Falkland Islands consist of a large number of bird species seen around the islands, and many of them breed on the smaller islands of the archipelago. 14 species of marine mammals including whales, seals, seal lions and dolphins frequent the surrounding waters. The elephant seal, the fur seal, and the sea lions all breed on the islands, and the largest elephant seal breeding site has over 500 animals in it.



227 bird species have been seen in the Falklands, over 60 of which are known to breed on the smaller islands. 21 of the resident species are land birds, and 18 are water birds. There are 22 species of seabirds which breed on the islands, and at least 18 annual migrators who breed elsewhere.

There are five penguin species breeding on the islands: King Penguins, Rockhopper Penguins, Magellanic Penguins, Gentoo Penguins, Macaroni Penguins.



Photo: Rockhopper Penguins

From the photos Rob showed, it was easy to believe that approximately 494,500 breeding pairs are thought to live on the island.

For tourists sitting alongside a penguin colony, it is possible to soak up the sights, sounds and scents watching Gentoos steal



nesting materials from their neighbours, Rockhoppers scale impossibly steep cliffs or young, fluffy kings behaving like petulant teenagers making whistling noises and stomping their feet

Photo: Gentoo Penguins

Rob and Cynthia flew to many islands where they were welcomed by the farmers, often staying in cottages and being transported to the main areas inhabited by birds, mainly penguins and seals. The Falkland Islands are one of the best places in the world for wildlife watching. With just a few exceptions, there are no barriers between watcher and wildlife and most days tourists are unlikely to share wildlife watching spots with other humans.

One cottage that Rob and Cynthia stayed in was at Bertha's Beach, East Falkland (see photo opposite). This spot is classified as an "Important Bird Area", a global standard set by Birdlife International



Falkland Islands is a very interesting country and by means of excellent photography Rob and Cynthia were able to show us much of the beautiful place and its special wildlife.

Weekend around Anglesea

All are invited to join the FNCV Fungi Group for their fungi foray weekend, 19-21 May

Contact: Carol Page or Les Hanrahan

SEANA Camp: Sale & district/ Latrobe Valley Mar. 2017

A Grevillea Garden

The full day excursion to the Grevillea Garden at Nicholson and to the Gippsland Lakes took place in calm sunny weather. The proprietors of the Grevillea Garden had, in six years, landscaped their block to accommodate a range of Grevillea species often grafted on to *G.robusta* root stock. Mature eucalypts had been retained, and the garden sloped down to a stormwater gully revegetated by a local interest group to prevent sediment run-off into the Nicholson River and thence into the Lakes. Plants were for sale, and we were provided with a welcome cuppa!

Sale Common

Sale Common includes an extensive wetland with a boardwalk across it giving good views of the birds. We watched considerable activity during the morning's excursion and were able to list: a dozen Royal Spoonbills, White-necked Heron, White-faced Heron, Intermediate



Photo:Royal Spoonbills, Sale Common

Egret, White Ibis, Purple Swamp-hen, Coots, juvenile White-breasted Sea Eagle, Little Pied Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Silver Gulls, Golden-headed Cisticola.

Eco Cruise of the Gippsland Lakes

At Lakes Entrance we ate lunch prior to boarding the Eco-cruise vessel at 1pm for a 3-hour cruise as far as Metung and return, completing a circuit which allowed us to look at the north and south shores of the lakes as well as different aspects of the islands. Pelicans, Crested Terns, Black-faced Cormorants and Great Cormorants were commonly seen with Pied Oystercatchers on the sandy spits and beaches, while a juvenile White-breasted Sea Eagle passed overhead.



In places the harbour was full of *Blue Blubber Jellyfish* which can be a threat to the cooling intakes of motor craft.

Time spent in the Entrance itself on both the outgoing and return parts of the cruise enabled us to grab a quick view of two

Bottlenose Dolphins and several Fur Seals which were waving their flippers in the air as an "airconditioning procedure", to quote the skipper. The commentary provided information on the historical settlement of the Lakes, previous and current use of the islands, the dredging necessary for the viability of the fishing



fleet and the development of tourism as seen in waterfront properties and in the marinas used by large numbers of yachts and cruisers. All in all, a pleasant and informative day.

Carol Hall

Avon-Mt Hedrick Wilderness Area

We reached the Avon-Mt Hedrick Wilderness Area, 40km north of Sale, along bitumen road before travelling up steep, dry and dusty gravel roads. Along the walk to Mt Hedrick through dry forest we saw the restricted plants Hairy Hopbush *Dodonaea boroniifolia* and Golden Grevillea *Grevillea chrysophaea*. While having lunch we saw one of the few plants in flower - Slender Mint-bush *Prostanthera saxicola*. After lunch we travelled to a feature of geological interest – the Avon River Channel - a gorge excavated in siltstones and sandstones by the Avon River. (See photo on left.)



Mitchell River National Park

Den of Nargun is at southern end of Mitchell River National Park, 70km north-east of Sale. This traditional place for aboriginal women is a shallow cave beneath a small waterfall on the Woolshed Creek. Stalactites have formed in the cave. The vegetation along the narrow gully of Woolshed Creek has significant flora with pockets of warm temperate rainforest. The area had vines, ferns, and tall trees including Lilly-pilly *Syzygium smithii* and Sweet Pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum*. A Lyrebird was seen scratching along the creek. On ridges, drier forest of wattle and eucalypts predominates.

John Gregurke

Excerpts from Club Meeting Minutes April 7, 2017

Opening and Apologies: President John Gregurke welcomed 25 members and two visitors. Apol.: B & K Elder, R Thomas, I Bone, A Arnold, J Morrish, P Norquay, E Swan, B Murphy, C & A Baulch, S Faull, M Moravec, M Sorrell.

Correspondence: IN From John Petheram, club member: suggestion that FNCB present a poster on Canadian RP flora monitoring project at the Biodiversity Across the Borders conference in June; update on flora monitoring at Canadian RP; proposal by mountain bike groups for a major network of trails in Canadian RP. From Lynda Wilson, Naturewatch: email to gauge FNCB's interest in supporting "Communities listening for nature" at Wombat Forest with Wombat Forestcare & NatureWatch.

OUT (since last Club Meeting on March 3, 2017):

To Susan Kruss: "Get well soon" message on behalf of the Club.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

Club participation in "Communities listening for nature" at Wombat Forest? Let Emily know. Club to present Poster on Canadian RP flora monitoring for *Biodiversity Across the Borders* conference in June. Emily prepared and submitted feedback to the review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Emily suggested that the Club apply for funding for administrative support to get the thousands of flora and fauna records held by Club members onto the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. Ken Hammond moved a motion that we form a sub-committee to progress the application. Marie K, Emily N, Peter N and John G offered to join the sub-committee.

Reports: Treasurer's Report: Opening bal: \$7 722.49; Inc. \$610; Exp. \$314.95; Closing bal.: \$8 017.54

SEANA Autumn Camp: Largest attendance for quite some time, with about 130 attendees including 12 FNCB members. (See p.4,5)

Canadian Regional Park Community Focus Workshop Report: John G. reported that 25 people from Friends of Canadian Corridor (including 3 FNCB members) joined with Parks Vic. staff and Consultants to test the information collected during the *Learning about* phase of the process that will lead to the Management Plan for Woowookarung RP by the end of 2017. Firstly a long list of uses of the Park was compiled. *Site Office* is a landscape architectural consultancy specialising in the design of innovative and high quality

public spaces. They presented information collected from many sources, covering: geology, topography, soils, vegetation, weeds, fauna (seeking more information of mammals, invertebrates, fungi, etc.), roads and tracks, services (water and electricity), historical sites. After lunch, time was spent forming some guiding principles that could be used when conflicts over activities in the park or managements issues. The pro-conservation group were strongly in favour of protecting the natural environment. A principle suggested by many groups was *No actions that have adverse effects on the environment should be permitted.*

One interesting piece of history: in Oct.1980, FNCB in a submission to Land Conservation Council asked for Canadian Forest to be made a Regional Park. Phase 2 during April-May will be letting PV know about ideas for the design and potential uses of the Park. John G. moved a motion that the FNCB prepare a written submission to PV detailing our dreams for the Regional Park. A sub-committee comprising Emily N, Margaret R, hopefully Roger T, John P and John G will work on it.

Show & Tell / Field Reports

John P. brought along the “poster” about the Club’s flora monitoring project at Canadian RP that was recently displayed, with positive feedback at the Buninyong Sustainability Expo. John G. recorded a pair of Brolgas with one chick at Haddon Racecourse Reserve on March 15. For the first time, Val H. saw three Rakali in a waterhole of Yarrowee Ck between Eureka and York Streets, Ballarat East. John Mildren spied Freckled Ducks at Lake Wendouree on April 4.

Indra Bone made a wonderful discovery in March. It is only the thirteenth confirmed sighting ever of a lovely green and white moth called a Cymatoplex moth, previously only known from Eppalock and Fryerstown. Indra discovered and photographed the moth at home in Napoleons. The moth caterpillars apparently only feed on the Drooping Cassinia, *C. arcuata*. The moths have only ever been seen in the last couple of weeks of March/ first week of April. He has been communicating with Peter Marriott who co-wrote the Moths of Victoria series and Peter has confirmed the sighting. If a second edition of book three goes ahead, Indra and his sighting will be included in it. Great work, Indra! To read more about the moth and see a photo of it, head to the following link: <https://www.google.com.au/amp/s/castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/2014/03/19/have-you-seen-this-secreteive-central-victorian-moth/amp/>

CALENDAR 2017

May

- Fri 5 *Frogs Croaking* –Ray Draper, Ballarat Environmental Network
- Sun 7 Exc: *Lesser-known reserves* - Elspeth Swan, club member
- Tues 23 Committee meeting at John Gregurke's

June

- Fri 2 *Springtails* - Penny Greenslade, Federation University
- *Sat 3 Exc: *Fungi Foray at Wonbat Forest*: Les Hanrahan, club member

Committee

President	John Gregurke	
Vice Pres	Fran Hanrahan	
Secretary	Emily Noble	Val Hocking
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan	John Mildren

Andy Arnold

Bill Elder

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email:Secretary:- Emily Noble

Editors: Fran Hanrahan
 John Petheram

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr of Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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